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THE FLIGHT OF EXPERTS FROM THE DDR

For the first time, leading men in Pankow are pointing openly to the difficulties experienced by the economy due to the lack of qualified workers. ULBRICHT is fully aware of the fact that within the next few years fewer young people will join the ranks of production because of the reduced birthrate in postwar years and is wondering how this drop can be compensated for. There is no doubt that the economic planners of the SED know likewise that the flight of qualified workers is draining the nerve power of the economy and that the DDR cannot permanently bear this blood-letting. Day after day several hundred inhabitants "vote with their feet" against the State of Workers and Peasants to look for a worthwhile existence in the Federal Republic.

Since 1950 more than two million inhabitants have left the Soviet Zone. In the years following the Second World War this exodus was compensated for in part by the influx of people from the former Eastern sections of the German Reich; however, since 1950, the loss of substance is increasingly evident. From 1954 to the end of 1958, 2,763 physicians, 625 apothecaries, 693 jurists, 12,600 teachers, 393 high school teachers, 11,298 engineers and technicians, and 8,561 students have turned their back on the East German state. This flight continued in the first quarter of 1959. Even the loss of a single young engineer trained in the professional schools of the DDR is a sensitive loss to the economy.

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Particularly serious problems are raised by the escape of physicians. Last January, 89 doctors left the DDR, 64 in February and 55 in March. The orders issued last fall by the Politburo of the SED for the alleviation of the position of physicians have had no significant result. In many cases, these directives are disregarded by the lower functionaries or followed only formally. Numerous hospitals, clinics, sanatoriums and medical faculties at the universities are inadequately staffed with expert personnel. West Berlin is wondering how long the SED leadership will be able to stick to its stubborn attitude and whether a change will be forced on them by the actual difficulties. Nevertheless, GROTEWOHL assured in a recent speech that the present course will be strictly adhered to and that it will not be influenced by tactical considerations for the Geneva Conference, or by Western protests against the sentences pronounced in Dresden against five university students, or by the accusations of Bishop DIBELIUS.